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Giancana Murder Held No 'Official' Gang-Style Killing

By Orr Kelly

Washington Star Staff Writer

Sam Giancana was probably killed by someone with a personal grudge who was careful to get prior clearance from mob leaders, according to a Justice Department official.

Peter F. Vaira, head of Justice's Organized Crime Strike Force in Chicago, sized up the slaying yesterday in a telephone interview.

Giancana, the 65-year-old former gang leader, was shot six times with a .22-caliber gun Thursday night in the basement of his Oak Park, Ill., home.

Giancana's murder came just as staff members of the Senate select intelligence committee were considering questioning him about reports that he had been involved with the Central Intelligence Agency in an assassination plot directed at Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., the committee vice chairman, said the panel had not decided whether to call Giancana as a witness.

"OF COURSE, now the matter is quite moot," Tower said.

"We have decided it was not an official gang-type killing," Vaira said. "But no doubt the person who did it had to get permission."

The major reason Vaira has concluded that the slaying was not an "official" murder is the way Giancana was killed.

"The Chicago style is to mutilate the person. They blow him away. Usually, it's a shotgun in the face," Vaira said.

In December of 1973, he noted, an old associate of Giancana's was gunned down in a Chicago restaurant. A shotgun blast struck him in the face, and it was hours before police even found out he was Richard

Cain, a former Chicago vice detective who had joined the mob.

"They got him with a shotgun, shot his head off," Vaira said. "We heard he was trying to get his own thing going, double-crossing the mob."

IN THAT CASE, Vaira said, Giancana — even though he had been a close associate of Cain's — would have to have given his approval for the slaying.

In addition to the style of the slaying, Vaira said several other factors convinced him it was not an official mob killing.

"He had been back here a year or so from Mexico (where he had been in exile until expelled by the Mexican government), but he had not tried to push his way back in. He had a low profile. No quarrels," Vaira said.

"We had had him before the grand jury four or five times, but he was just giving us junk. To give you an idea of the kind of garbage he was giving us, we were thinking of indicting him for perjury. He wasn't hurting anyone and they knew it."

"Sam was kind of vicious and he played around always had some girl friends. I think it was someone with a personal motive," Vaira said.

THERE IS ALSO a possibility, discounted by Vaira, that someone found Giancana's door open because of the warm evening, simply walked in off the street and shot him.

"You don't walk in off the street to Sam Giancana's," Vaira said. "This was someone he knew — a revenge killing."

Even though the killing does not appear to have been an official mob execution, it was a coldly professional job.

Giancana was shot five times in the neck and once in the mouth. A spokesman for the Oak Park police said the gun was fired upward, directing the bullets into the victim's brain. The gun was not found, but six .22-caliber shells were scattered on the floor.

The murder may also deprive the Senate committee of the cooperation of John Roselli, a Giancana lieutenant who reportedly was to carry out the plot against Castro.

ROSELLI, WHO was scheduled to appear before the committee Tuesday, told Washington Star Staff Writer Morris Siegel yesterday that he may balk at testifying because of Giancana's killing.

Tower said he felt the Senate committee has "better sources of information than Mr. Giancana."

But then he added, with careful understatement: "The committee notes with interest that Mr. Giancana was done away with."

Vaira said the strike force lawyers had never been asked to check Giancana's possible involvement with the CIA and he had not been questioned on that subject.

Vincent L. Inserra, head of the FBI's organized crime squad in Chicago, said Giancana had been under investigation as part of the probe of racket activities since 1967. But he said the murder at this point appeared to be a violation of local rather than federal laws and the bureau was not actively involved in investigating the slaying.

IN HIS 50-YEAR crime career, Giancana rose from common car thief to the apparent safety of his recent role as a retired mob leader.

During World War II, the draft board labeled him "a constitutional psychopath with an inadequate personality."

They reportedly based his 4-F classification on the answer he gave when he was asked what he did for a living.

"I steal," Giancana replied.